



York's libraries: Centres of learning and opportunity for all

York's libraries are very successful. Our provider, Explore York, has introduced many new services. Visitor numbers and book issues are good and the service offers excellent value for money. We know that library users are very satisfied with the current service. In particular, they value libraries as spaces for the community to come together, where everybody is welcome.

Nonetheless, we cannot stand still. We must continue to innovate, building on our success to ensure that the service continues to meet changing needs and expectations in the years ahead.

We also know that our users want to see improvement in the fabric of our library buildings. This reflects the fact that many of our buildings are in poor condition, needing around £3m spending on them in the coming years. We need to know how best to target the council's investment.



Our vision for the future

Annex A

We propose to build on the success of our libraries by continuing to place learning at the heart of everything we do, re-imagining our libraries as Centres of Learning and Opportunity for All. We believe that our libraries should continue to be stocked with a broad range of books and materials that promote reading and literacy and to support people with the information they need in their everyday lives.

Increasingly they will be:

- Fit-for-purpose, contemporary spaces meeting the needs of everyone
- Fully flexible with spaces easily transformed to other purposes
- Fully accessible: information will be easy to obtain, reading encouraged, research easy and learning natural
- Outward looking, linking with the community and drawing people in to foster a sense of place
- Open at times that reflect the needs of the community including late night and weekend opening where required
- Creative spaces that encourage innovation and the sharing of knowledge
- Shaped by local need, promoting community involvement and enabling local people to take action in their area
- Transparent and visible from the outside, clearly signed and encouraging people to come in
- Staffed by well trained staff with excellent customer focus

They will also provide state-of-the-art learning spaces that have:

- The latest digital technologies
- Flexible spaces for formal and informal learning
- Study space and creative spaces
- A range of learning programmes
- Digital inclusion programmes to get people online for free



What network of library buildings should we have?

Annex A

We believe that there should be a range of libraries to meet the needs of different users. Some libraries will be larger, offering all services, and some smaller, designed to meet more local needs. We are suggesting five types:

York Explore: this should remain the flagship facility where all services are available including the Archive & Local History Centre.

Explore Library Learning Centres: Experience shows that the bigger libraries are popular (the biggest 4 currently account for 64% of library visits). People will travel further to use them because they have more stock, are open longer and offer more services. There is a case to build on this by creating three Explore Library Learning Centres across the city providing:

- A broad range of library and information facilities
- Space for Adult Learning courses
- Café
- Space for multiple community use / hires
- Access to archive and local history resources

The Explore Library Learning Centres would be located in the areas of greater need: at the Burnholme Centre (currently under construction), Acomb Explore (which has been so successful that it would now benefit from enlargement) and in the Clifton area (potentially a replacement for / upgrade of the current Clifton library).

Explore Gateways: Offered in a variety of venues, these libraries could be co-located with other community activities, with local communities invited to be involved in their operation. They will remain a key part of the statutory service and the library provider will continue to ensure that they are staffed and stocked with books, materials and information.

Virtual Libraries: A 24/7 online service including ebooks and emagazines, other online resources and virtual spaces for people to share ideas e.g. online reading groups.

Reading Cafés: These are a different type of library service encouraging the joy of reading especially for those who may feel uncomfortable in a more traditional library.

Across all the libraries we can see a big difference in how much individual libraries cost, ranging between £2 per visit and just 32p per visit. When we enter into the new contract we believe it is both important and possible to make sure that all our provision provides good value for money. We need ideas for innovative ways to provide excellent services whilst saving money.

